

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0574

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BY

SUBJECT: COMMENT ON BURUNDI GOVERNMENT CHANGES

REF: BUJUMBURA 535

1. WHILE THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME OF THE POWER SHIFTS REFLECTED BY RECENT CHANGES WITHIN THE GRB IS NOT YET KNOWN, THE PRINCIPAL BENEFICIARIES APPEAR TO BE MINISTER OF INTERIOR MAJOR RWURI AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE PHILIPPE MINANI. NOT ONLY HAVE THEY GAINED FROM ACCRETIONS OF FORMAL AUTHORITY TO THEMSELVES AND TO THEIR FRIENDS, BUT THEY ARE REPEATEDLY REPORTED TO BE THE SUCCESSFUL INSTIGATORS OF VARIOUS SELF-AGGRANDIZING MOVES IN RECENT WEEKS.

2. THE MOST STRIKING DEVELOPMENT LATELY IS A SEPTEMBER 6 PRESIDENTIAL DECREE WHICH HAS GIVEN EACH PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR COMPLETE AUTHORITY OVER THE ACTIVITIES OF ALL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN HIS PROVINCE, THUS PRESUMABLY DEROGATING FROM THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO THEIR SUBSTANTIVE MINISTRIES. THIS TENDS TO STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF RWURI, WHO IS SEEKING TO
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EXPAND THE INTERIOR MINISTER'S TRADITIONAL ROLE, AS A FORMAL

LIAISON CHANNEL BETWEEN THE GOVERNORS AND THE PRESIDENT, INTO THE POWER TO COMMAND THE FORMER, WHO HAVE PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED A LARGE DEGREE OF DE FACTO INDEPENDENCE. FOR EXAMPLE, HE RECENTLY CHAIRED A MEETING OF ALL THE GOVERNORS IN GITEGA WHICH DISCUSSED THE CURRENT FOOD SHORTAGE, POLICY TOWARD REFUGEES RETURNING FROM ABROAD, AND SECURITY CONTROLS. WHILE THE ABOVE DECREE CITED THE GOVERNORS' LONG-ESTABLISHED EX OFFICIO POSITION AS PROVINCIAL FIRST SECRETARIES OF THE UPRONA PARTY AS THE REASON FOR THEIR NEW AUTHORITY, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT IN THEIR PARTY CAPACITY, THEIR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR IS BERNARD BIZINDAVYI, NATIONAL EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF UPRONA, AND NEW SURETE CHIEF, ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE MINANI-RWURI FACTION.

3. WE WOULD EXPECT THAT A BURUNDI GOVERNMENT DOMINATED BY MINANI AND RWURI WILL BE JUST AS DEDICATED TO TUTSI SUPREMACY AND JUST AS INEFFICIENT IN NORMAL ADMINISTRATION AS ONE DOMINATED BY FONMIN SIMBANANIYE, UNTIL RECENTLY THE PUTATIVE STRONGMAN UNDER MICOMBERO. RWURI, LIKE SIMBANANIYE, WAS ONE OF THE PRIME MOVERS OF THE 1972 REPRESSION AND, UNLIKE THE FONMIN, IS REPORTED TO HAVE TAKEN A PERSONAL HAND IN THE KILLINGS AND TO HAVE DERIVED PLEASURE FROM IT. CURRENTLY, RWURI SEEMS TO BE TRYING TO TIGHTEN SECURITY WITHIN THE COUNTRY; AT THEIR GITEGA MEETING THE GOVERNORS WERE ASKED TO ENSURE THAT ALL BARUNDI CARRY IDENTIFICATION CARDS AND LAISSEZ-PASSERS. RWURI IS ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN BEHIND THE NOTE WHICH REITERATED RESTRICTIONS ON DIPLOMATS' CONTACTS AND TRAVEL WITHIN BURUNDI (BUJUMBURA A-83).

4. MINANI HAS FREQUENTLY BEEN REPORTED TO BE A MODERATE. HE IS A HEAVY DRINKER, HOWEVER, AND WHEN DRUNK HAS BEEN KNOWN TO INDULGE IN QUITE ARBITRARY VIOLENCE. SOME OTHER INDICATIONS, TOO, SUGGEST A MAN FULL OF BARELY CONTROLLED ANGER. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE WERE REPORTS SOON AFTER HE BECAME MINISTER OF JUSTICE LAST SPRING THAT HE WAS MAKING SOME SMALL BEGINNINGS TOWARD RESTORING PROPERTY TO HUTU WIDOWS.

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5. THERE ARE MEN OF GOOD WILL AND NATIONAL CONCERN WITHIN THE BURUNDI ESTABLISHMENT. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS NOT INDICATION SO FAR THAT THE INFLUENCE OF SUCH MEN WILL BE INCREASED BY THE EMERGENCY OF MINANI AND RWURI, IN PLACE OF SIMBANANIYE, AS THE STRONGEST PERSONALITIES IN THE BURUNDI CABINET.
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